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ABSTRACT

This sampler discusses California's English-language arts assessment program and presents examples of elementary school reading assessments, writing assessments, and writing prompts. The first section of the sampler takes an integrated look at the changes which make up the new English-language arts assessment. The second section presents the scoring guide for reading, three student responses to a sample elementary reading prompt, and commentary on each student response using the criteria in the scoring guide. The third section of the sampler offers scoring guides and sample student papers for the two types of writing assessed in the 1992-1993 transition-year assessment: expressive writing and persuasive writing. The fourth section presents a writing prompt: an excerpt from a story with directions for students to write about their reading; guidelines for students on working in small groups to discuss the story; and a writing assignment based on the short story. (RS)

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A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessment

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Elementary

Preliminary Edition

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A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessment

Elementary

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A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessment – Elementary was developed by the California Assessment Program's English-Language Arts Development Team (see the acknowledgments for the membership of the team and others who made significant contributions to the document).

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I. California's New English–Language Arts Assessment: An Integrated Look

> Effective English-language arts programs include a wide range of assessment techniques to evaluate students' growth in understanding challenging literature, confronting important social issues and values in literature and their own lives, writing clear and lively prose, speaking thoughtfully and effectively, and listening critically, all of which enable students to participate fully in society.
>
> – *English Language Arts Framework*

English-language arts teachers at all grade levels have long recognized that students use language actively, interactively, strategically, and fluently as they construct and communicate meaning. Students can grow in their ability to use language as they explore the universe of discourse through their reading, writing, and thinking. Authors of *California's English-Language Arts Framework* envisioned a literature-based English-language arts program that actively engaged students in reading, writing, and reflecting on a wide range of significant literary works and human experiences. At the heart of the framework is a paradigm shift in which "constructing meaning" replaced "gaining knowledge" as the primary goal.

The shifting focus of English-language arts curricula statewide called for changes in instructional strategies. The *English-Language Arts Framework*, along with the state model curriculum standards and guides, repeatedly describe English-language arts programs that "encourage students to read widely and in depth, write often in many formats, study important writings from many disciplines, and relate these studies to their own lives in meaningful ways." In English-language arts classes, students are expected to be active participants in their learning.

Where once a single correct answer to a generic question was thought to be sufficient in determining comprehension, today such a measure is considered too constricting, not very informative, and an insufficient indication of the student's construction of meaning. The *Framework* speaks specifically to the need for assessment to mirror accurately the integrated parts of the language arts that contribute to the wholeness of understanding. "With the revised curriculum in place, assessment of its effectiveness must depend on tests that reflect the purposes of the curriculum. Teachers and others responsible for assessment will create tests based on significant works whose meanings have import for all students; tests will integrate all of the language arts by including significant reading and writing and reflecting the student's oral skills as well; and tests will focus on students' meaning, not on formalistic features such as plot and character." Since the construction of meaning is the essence of both reading and writing, the new assessment allows students to shape the outcome rather than to identify correct meanings that test-makers have posited.

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The new English-language arts assessment has three major purposes:

1. To establish standards for evaluating students' performance when they read diverse kinds of materials for different purposes and when they write essays that reflect a variety of writing types
2. To measure how well students are able to construct meaning
3. To improve the instructional program by providing an assessment that reflects the *Framework* and incorporates the expertise of some of California's best teachers

The Development of the Assessment

The English Language Arts Assessment Advisory Committee—a California Department of Education committee representing the whole spectrum of educators—working with internationally recognized leaders in the field, developed the guidelines for a new English-language arts assessment that would reflect alignment with the *Framework*, mirror exemplary English-language arts programs, and build on CAP's writing assessment. Such an assessment would:

- Assess reading in a way that allows students to construct their own meanings, by integrating new understandings with the unique knowledge and experience each brings to a task.
- Incorporate collaborative group work, which encourages students to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening in ways that reflect good instruction.
- Complement and strengthen the existing California writing assessment.

To carry out this vision, the Department of Education in 1989 expanded the team of classroom teachers that had been developing the CAP writing assessment to include English-language arts teachers from grades one through twelve as well as teachers of science, history, and mathematics. These development team teachers have been responsible for shaping the test format, developing prompts for the assessment, and constructing scoring rubrics.

Definition of Reading and the Reading Assessment

Reading, as defined for the purposes of California's English-language arts assessment, is the process of constructing meaning through transactions with the text. In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes the responsibility for interpreting the text, guided not only by the language of the text but also by the personal experiences, cultural experiences, and prior knowledge that the reader brings to the task. Rather than believing that the meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and the distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

As teachers we expect students to be actively engaged in making sense of important values, concepts, issues, and attitudes related to a text. We want students to think critically as they explore interests, clarify values, solve problems, resolve conflicts, generate new ideas, synthesize/apply learnings, set goals, and make decisions in response to the literature they read. We want to see what students can do with the information they acquire as a result of their meaning-making processes and also their attempts to discover new understandings.

In our rapidly changing world, students need to understand that there are many purposes for reading and to demonstrate the ability to read for different purposes. Some students may be able to read elaborate directions for playing a video game but be unable to make any sense of a chapter

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in their history book. They may be able to read the lyrics of a song but be unable to read a poem that has no accompanying sound. They may be able to read a novel but not a voter information booklet. Like the writing assessment in the middle grades and high school that measures how students write for different purposes, the new reading assessment includes a range of reading purposes students will encounter throughout their lives. Although we cannot assess reading in the abstract any more than we can assess thinking, we can assess the quality of reading by looking at written and graphic evidence of how the student interacts with a text.

Texts selected for the assessment are stories, articles, and poems appropriate for each grade level tested. Texts may, on occasion, be an excerpt of a long piece; they will always, however, be complete in themselves. Occasionally two related texts—a story and poem or an article and story—are paired. While it is not possible to match specific texts to individual pupils, the assessment does draw upon a diverse range of materials deemed suitable for English-language arts classes. Since students will construct meanings for a text based on transactions among text, context, and experience, selections for the assessment center around concepts familiar to students. In all cases, teachers on the development team evaluate the appropriateness of subject matter and complexity of text for each tested grade level.

Collaborative Group Work

Teachers on the development team wanted to assure that this assessment was sensitive to both instructional strategies used in the best classrooms in California and those recommended in *Framework*. The activities included in this section of the assessment serve two purposes. First, they allow students to extend their understanding of the reading passage by sharing the ideas they feel are important or exploring a particular aspect of the piece in depth with others. Second, they engage the students in activities that prepare them for the writing assessment.

The Writing Assessment

Criteria for selecting the types of writing to be assessed at elementary, middle, and high school levels include:

- Emphasis on what California's best school writing programs would use
- Relationship to students' reading experiences
- Consistency with students' cognitive development
- Appropriate curriculum sequencing
- Appropriateness for assessment purposes

The types of writing identified for the elementary writing assessment are more broadly-based categories developmentally appropriate for nine-year olds, while the middle and high school categories reflect the finer distinctions of writing types appropriate for their age groups. The eight types of writing used in the CAP writing assessments since 1987 for the middle school and those developed for the high school have been maintained in the new assessment. The chart on the next page shows the types of writing selected for each level of the assessment.

In the spring 1993 administration, two types of writing will be assessed at grade four: Expressive and Persuasive. At grade ten, four types of writing will be included: Autobiographical Incident, Interpretation, Reflective Essay, and Speculation about Causes or Effects. However, at grade eight, eight types of writing will be assessed.

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Types of Writing	Elementary	Middle Grades	High School
Expressive	X		
Autobiographical Incident		X	X
Firsthand Biography		X	
Reflective Essay			X
Persuasive	X		
Problem Solution		X	
Evaluation		X	X
Speculation about Causes or Effects		X	X
Interpretation			X
Controversial Issues			X
Informative	X		
Report of Information		X	X
Observational Writing		X	X
Narrative	X		
Story		X	

The Design of the Assessment

The design of the new English-language arts assessment calls for students to read and respond independently to a text, to work in small collaborative groups, and to respond individually to a writing prompt. Each section is intended to take one class period (approximately one hour). A description of the three sections of the assessment format follows.

Section I: Reading

The reading section includes one or two texts and includes preliminary comments to prepare students for the reading activities. For example, if the task involves two or more passages, students are told that they will read a specific number of passages; if the passage is an excerpt from a longer work, a brief introduction to the excerpt is given. A statement then directs students to read the text and invites them to mark the text in any way that helps them to better understand what they are reading. ("You may mark the text in any way that helps you to better understand what you are reading.") They may annotate, ask questions, draw or write responses in a wide right-hand margin. The reading text fills the left-hand side of the page with the remaining space available for any notes or annotations that the student wishes to write or draw while reading.

After the text, each prompt has an initial response question or graphic activity. This question is designed to elicit students' immediate responses—feelings, questions, opinions, memories, ideas. Four to seven additional questions or activities help students move beyond their initial response to a deeper exploration of meaning. They allow students to demonstrate or extend their understanding of a literary text by connecting with, challenging, and reflecting on the text. Some of the strategies used in the prompts include double-entry journals , listing, clustering, drawing, completing charts or diagrams such as the "open mind" or Venn diagram. Students are invited to bring their own experiences into their transactions with the text in many ways. Each prompt presents a final opportunity ("This is your chance to tell anything else about this story, poem,

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etc.") that allows students to express any other insights, issues, or concerns not elicited by previous activities. Students may, through their writing or drawing on this page, come to closure and/or discover new insights emerging from the text and/or from their reading experience.

Written and graphic responses to texts offer powerful insights into student thinking and provide significant evidence of a student's reading performance. The scoring guide for reading identifies the quality of reading a student demonstrates as he or she engages in the process of reading. Though a student does respond in writing in this section, the quality of the writing is not evaluated. A reading score will be determined from the evidence of each student's performance on the reading section.

Section II: Group Work

Students who have read the same text selection(s) form small groups of five or less. Activities for this section serve two purposes: to extend students' reading of the text and to initiate prewriting activities that they will use in Section III, the writing assessment. Guidelines contain specific directions for collaborative activities such as sharing individual experiences with the text, exploring the text further, making group graphics, role playing, writing informally, sharing their drafts, and responding to each other's ideas for writing. This section is not being scored.

Section III: Writing

The writing assessment section is linked to the reading assessment in one of two ways. Some writing prompts link directly to the reading section by asking students to move beyond their initial interactions with the text to write a longer, more fully developed essay expressing their understanding of the text or evaluating the selection or a character in the text. Other writing prompts are more loosely tied to the reading, using the topic or theme of the reading selection as a springboard to an essay based on personal experience and knowledge. Each prompt has the following two parts and is designed to elicit one of the distinctive types of writing tested at a grade level:

Writing Situation/Getting Ready to Write. This section of the prompt establishes a framework for the writing prompt and provides students with a context for their writing. It orients students to a type of writing and provides specific background about the topic. The occasion for writing is specified in this section, preparing students to be thinking about their intended audience.

Directions for Writing/Time to Write. The second section gives students the directions regarding the assignment's topic, intent, potential audience, and any other information students need in order to respond to the prompt.

The essay written in response to the writing prompt receives two scores, one for rhetorical effectiveness and one for conventions.

Meeting the Needs of a Diverse Population

One of the greatest concerns the advisory committee and the development team members have grappled with as they have developed the new assessment for reading and writing is the effect it will have on California's diverse student population. Teachers want the assessment to have a positive impact on the curriculum, and with the future reporting of individual test scores, teachers

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want the new assessment to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their best reading and writing abilities, and not be a minimum competency test.

Some Californians have expressed the opinion that performance assessment may be unfair to certain populations of students and that multiple choice tests rely less on a student's proficiency in English and are thereby fairer to these students. The intent of California's new performance assessment is to expand the potential for student response and to allow all students to demonstrate their abilities to construct meaning through a variety of activities that include graphics, writing logs, and other strategies. Emerging readers often develop their writing skills by first expressing their ideas graphically, while experienced readers may come to new understandings in this way. This assessment gives opportunities for both graphic and written expressions of meaning. Teachers on the development team are very aware of the necessity of designing an assessment program that meets multi-cultural needs. They have worked in concert with ideas formulated in the California *English-Language Arts Framework*, and have employed every available means to insure that the assessment content—texts for reading, activities for group work, and topics for writing—reflect California's diverse population.

Reflections and Next Steps

California's writing assessment has been recognized nationally as the first large-scale performance assessment to be successfully implemented in K-12 public schools. A key to the program's success has been its close relationship to state frameworks and model curriculum guides for English-language arts, the leadership role of teachers in the test development and scoring processes, the availability of instructional materials and other assistance materials, and multiple opportunities for staff development.

Many of the components that received positive recognition in the writing assessment have been incorporated in the new integrated assessment. Special features of the English-language arts assessment include:

- Continued emphasis on maintaining a strong alignment between state curriculum frameworks and assessment
- A full range of carefully defined reading purposes and writing types
- The focus on reading and writing assessments as dynamic activities that involve the construction of meaning
- Group activities calling for students to interact with texts and with other students and providing opportunities for prewriting
- The formation of teams of teachers to design tasks, scoring guides, and support materials
- A commitment to staff development and scoring supported by regional consortia, the California Literature Project and the California Writing Project

The new English-language arts assessment will provide evidence of how students perform when actively engaged in real reading and writing tasks. Teachers on the development team, along with consultants and Department of Education staff, will continue to refine procedures as they analyze student papers, evaluate teacher responses, and inform their work with classroom experience. The far-reaching goals for assessment are made possible through the dedicated efforts of many outstanding educators who continue to see the teaching of tomorrow's leaders as an admirable and valued profession.

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II. Elementary Reading Assessment

The materials contained in this section include the scoring guide for reading and three student responses to a sample elementary reading prompt that is based on an excerpt from John Gardiner's story *Stone Fox*. The commentary that follows each paper evaluates the student response using the criteria contained in the scoring guide and explains why the paper reflects a high-, medium-, or low-range performance.

Scoring Guide
for
The California Reading Assessment

Reading, as defined for the purposes of California's integrated English-language arts assessment, is the process of constructing meaning through transactions with text. In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes responsibility for producing an interpretation of a text guided not only by the language of the text but also by the associations, cultural experiences, and knowledge that the reader brings to the interpretive task. Rather than believing that meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and the distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

To assess a student's performance in reading is therefore not only to assess the richness and plausibility of the meaning that the student produces but also the quality of the process through which meaning is produced. In some cases, students may be better readers than the evidence seems to show. Scorers must give credit for all evidence of the construction of meaning but, at the same time, be careful not to base a score on scorer-inferred meanings. Scorers will always be alert to graphic or written clues that show indications of reading performance. Scorers should also note that neither length of responses nor negative statements about the assessment provide information about the quality of the reading performance. Frustration, confidence and boredom may manifest at any level.

A score should not be lowered by a chance or occasional misreading of a word, phrase, or fact in a test performance that would otherwise demonstrate a higher level of reading performance. Similarly, the scorer must credit an interpretation that is supported by plausible reasons and/or references to the text, even though the interpretation may differ from the scorer's own expectations.

When two passages are paired, one more complex than the other, the best readers interpret both passages and explore implications of the pairing. Less able or emerging readers may be less successful at handling the complexities of the more difficult passage and usually focus on the more accessible one. Looking carefully at the responses to both passages gives scorers multiple opportunities to rate the overall performance. For the purposes of this assessment, when two selections are used, they both serve as the basis for the reading assessment.

Although scorers will score every paper that has any evidence of the construction of meaning, they have two options in addition to score points six through one:

No Response will be given to papers that have no evidence of the construction of any meaning from a reading of the text.

Unscored will be assigned to papers that

1. Are written in a language other than English
2. Are undecipherable because of illegible handwriting
3. Are limited only to underlined words or question marks or statements such as "I don't understand"
4. Have what appear to be idle or irrelevant doodlings or markings on the paper (This option is to be exercised only when there is no perceptible relevance to the text(s) in the prompt. If the text is a story that includes a dog sled race and the student draws a picture of a track event, for example, assuming that there is no other evidence available on the test, the paper would receive a score point one. The picture shows a personal connection at least to the

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word *race* in the text; such a connection shows the student is responding at the decoding level, which is a score point one.)

While every effort has been made to construct a reading assessment approach that gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their ability to construct meaning from interacting with given texts, it is important to emphasize that each individual reading score represents the reading achievement of a particular student on a specific day, reading given texts for assessment purposes. No students should be labeled as a "three reader" or a "five reader" on the basis of any single assessment.

Complex factors that affect student responses include the following:

- The purpose of the reading, as established by the prompt and perhaps modified by the student's own needs as established by his or her relationship to the text
- The nature of the questions and activities in the prompt
- Previous experience with the text type or with the subject of the text

Reading Performances

Effective readers *connect* with, *reflect* on, and *challenge* the text. Readers do not need to show evidence of all the performances listed here. The discerning and insightful reader may display a broad spectrum of reading behaviors or may investigate a few selected behaviors in great depth. The exemplary reader may show variety, complexity, breadth, and/or depth. Through their writing and graphics, these readers show convincing evidence of their ability to construct meaning. They may

1. Experiment with ideas; think divergently; take risks; express opinions (e.g., speculate, hypothesize, explore alternative scenarios; raise questions; make predictions; think metaphorically).
2. Explore multiple possibilities of meaning; see cultural and/or psychological nuances and complexities in the text.
3. Fill in gaps; use clues and evidence in the passage to draw conclusions; make plausible interpretations of ideas, facts, concepts, and/or arguments.
4. Recognize and deal with ambiguities in the text.
5. Revise, reshape and/or deepen early interpretations.
6. Evaluate; examine the degree of fit between the author's ideas or information and the reader's prior knowledge or experience.
7. Challenge the text(s) by agreeing or disagreeing, arguing, endorsing, questioning, and/or wondering.
8. Demonstrate understanding of the work as a whole.
9. Show sensitivity to the structure of the text(s): how the parts work together; how characters and/or other elements of the work(s) change.
10. Show aesthetic appreciation of the text(s); see linguistic and structural complexities.
11. Allude to and/or retell specific passage(s) to validate and/or expand ideas.
12. Make connections between the text(s) and their own ideas, experiences, and knowledge
13. Demonstrate emotional engagement with the text(s).
14. Retell, summarize, and/or paraphrase with purpose.
15. Reflect on the meaning(s) of the text(s), including larger or more universal significance; express a major understanding about or insight into a subject, an aspect of self, or of life in general.

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Score Point 6 – Exemplary Reading Performance

An exemplary reading performance is insightful, discerning, and perceptive as the reader constructs and reflects on meaning in a text. Readers at this level are sensitive to linguistic, structural, cultural, and psychological nuances and complexities. They fill in gaps in a text, making plausible assumptions about unstated causes or motivations, or drawing meaning from subtle cues. They differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They recognize real or seeming contradictions, exploring possibilities for their resolution or tolerating ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole.

Readers achieving score point six develop connections with and among texts. They connect their understanding of the text not only to their own ideas, experience, and knowledge, but to their history as participants in a culture or larger community, often making connections to other texts or other works of art. Exceptional readers draw on evidence from the text to generate, validate, expand, and reflect on their own ideas.

These readers take risks. They entertain challenging ideas and explore multiple possibilities of meaning as they read, grounding these meanings in their acute perceptions of textual and cultural complexities. They often revise their understanding of a text as they re-read and as additional information or insight becomes available to them. They sometimes articulate a newly developed level of understanding.

Readers demonstrating a score point six performance challenge the text. They carry on an internal dialogue with the writer, raising questions, taking exception, agreeing, disagreeing, appreciating or objecting to text features. They may test the validity of the author's ideas, information, and/or logic by considering the authority of the author and the nature and quality of the author's source(s). They frequently suggest ways of rewriting the text, speculating about the ideology or cultural or historical biases that seem to inform a text, sometimes recognizing and embracing and sometimes resisting the ideological position that a text seems to construct for its reader.

Score Point 5 – Discerning Reading Performance

A reading performance at score point five is discerning, thorough, and perceptive, but will probably show somewhat less insight or sensitivity to nuances and complexities of text than an exemplary reading. These readers are able to fill in gaps in a text, making plausible assumptions from subtle cues; but they engage in these operations with less acuteness of vision than more expert readers. They recognize and differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They recognize real or seeming contradictions, exploring possibilities for their resolution or tolerating ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole.

Readers achieving score point five see connections between their own lives and the world of the text. They connect their understanding of the text not only to their own ideas, experience, and knowledge, but to their history as participants in a culture or community. They often make connections to other texts or other works of art; these connections, while always purposeful and connected to the text, may be more predictable than those made by exceptional readers. They also draw on evidence from the text to generate, validate, expand, and reflect on their own ideas.

These readers may explore multiple possibilities of meaning. While they may form firm interpretations early in their reading, they are open to revising their ideas as additional information

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or insight becomes available to them. They sometimes articulate newly developed levels of understanding.

Readers performing at this level challenge the text. They pose questions, postulate answers, take exception, agree, disagree, speculate; however, the questions and/or issues they raise may not be as insightful or perceptive as those of the reader demonstrating an exemplary reading.

Score Point 4 – Thoughtful Reading Performance

Readers at score point four construct a thoughtful and plausible interpretation of a text. They fill in some gaps in a text, making assumptions about unstated causes or motivations or drawing meaning from cues in the text. They usually differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They may recognize real or seeming contradictions, but are sometimes distracted by these contradictions and by ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work.

Readers achieving score point four develop connections with and among texts. They usually connect their understanding of the text to their own experience and knowledge and sometimes to other texts. When directed, these readers may generate, validate, expand, and/or reflect on their ideas about the text, but with less depth than in a score point five or six response. These readers tend to paraphrase or retell, often thoroughly and purposefully. They also see, however, a more general significance in or wider application of the literal facts of the text.

These readers, while confident, rarely take risks. They accept the text without exploring multiple possibilities of meaning. They tend to present their understanding of a text as fixed and rarely revise their interpretation as they re-read and as additional information becomes available.

Readers demonstrating this level of reading performance sometimes challenge or question the text. They may raise questions and may agree or disagree without explaining their reactions.

Score Point 3 – Literal Reading Performance

Students performing at score point three are literal readers, constructing a plausible but superficial interpretation of a text. They show little sensitivity to nuances and complexities.

These readers develop few or no connections with or among texts. Sometimes they connect the text associationally with personal experience, but the connection is generally superficial and unexamined.

Score point three readers are not risk takers. They show little tolerance for textual difficulties or lack of closure. Confronted by textual complexity, they are inclined to ignore the difficulties. Their reading process tends not to be recursive: having made some initial sense of the text, they are inclined to retain their view without testing or revising it.

Readers at the score point three level of reading performance rarely challenge the text or carry on an internal dialogue with the writer. If they raise questions at all the questions will be largely unproductive expressions of frustration or low level inquiries (i.e., about word meanings). Any expressed appreciations or criticisms are likely to be simplistic.

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Score Point 2 – Limited Reading Performance

A limited reading performance indicates that readers at score point two construct partial and reductive meanings for a text. Responses of some readers suggest that they may not have been able to read the whole text. Others are unable to see the text as a whole and tend to focus on one or two ideas or segments of the text.

Readers within this range of performance develop few or no connections with texts. They may, as they recognize some idea, continue to write or draw, but their responses will appear to have only a tangential relevance to the text.

These readers seldom ask questions of a text or offer meaningful evaluations of what they read. They tend to abandon or become entangled in difficult sections of a text.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Reading Performance

In a minimal reading performance, the reader appears to understand and respond only to an individual word, title, and/or phrase but not to respond in ways that demonstrate even a rudimentary understanding of how these words relate to text ideas.

Any connections such readers may make to their own experience will appear in the form of words or drawings that have textual associations only to an isolated word or phrase.

Level-one reader responses suggest that these students engage in reading largely as an act of decoding rather than as a process of making coherent meaning.

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Sample Student Papers
Elementary Reading

Section One
Reading

An Excerpt from *Stone Fox* by John Gardiner

Getting Ready to Read

Here is some information about the story you will read. It will help you understand what is happening.

Little Willy and his dog Searchlight are in a dog sled race. So are Stone Fox and his five beautiful Samoyeds (a strong breed of dog with a thick white coat). The prize in the race is $500.00.

Little Willy hopes to win the money to save his grandfather's farm. His grandfather is very ill. Stone Fox hopes to win the $500.00 to buy back land for his Indian tribe, the Shoshone.

This part of the story begins in the middle of the race. Read to see what happens.

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance

Time to Read

STONE FOX

As they approached the farmhouse, little Willy thought he saw someone in Grandfather's bedroom window. It was difficult to see with only one good eye. The someone was a man. With a full beard.

It couldn't be. But it was! It was Grandfather!

Grandfather was sitting up in bed. He was looking out the window.

Little Willy was so excited he couldn't think straight. He started to stop the sled, but Grandfather indicated no, waving him on. "Of course," little Willy said to himself. "I must finish the race. I haven't won yet."

"Go, Searchlight!" little Willy shrieked.

"Go, girl!"

Grandfather was better. Tears of joy rolled down little Willy's smiling face. Everything was going to be all right.

And then Stone Fox made his move.

One by one he began to pass the other racers. He went from last place to eighth. Then from eighth place to seventh. Then from seventh to sixth. Sixth to fifth.

He passed the others as if they were standing still.

He went from fifth place to fourth. Then to third. Then to second.

Until only little Willy remained.

But little Willy still had a good lead. In fact, it was not until the last two miles of the race that

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

I like the way the author wrot this. He gives me excitement.

GO ON

John R. Gardiner. *Stone Fox*. New York: Thomas Y Crowell, 1980. Text © 1980 by John Reynold Gardiner.

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Stone Fox got his first glimpse of little Willy since the race had begun.

The five Samoyeds looked magnificent as they moved effortlessly across the snow. Stone Fox was gaining, and he was gaining fast. And little Willy wasn't aware of it.

Look back, little Willy! Look Back!

But little Willy didn't look back. He was busy thinking about Grandfather. He could hear him laughing...and playing his harmonica...

Finally little Willy glanced back over his shoulder. He couldn't believe what he saw! Stone Fox was nearly on top of him!

This made little Willy mad. Mad at himself. Why hadn't he looked back more often? What was he doing? He hadn't won yet. Well, no time to think of that now.

He had a race to win.

"Go, Searchlight! Go, girl!"

But Stone Fox kept gaining. Silently. Steadily.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

The lead Samoyed passed little Willy and pulled up even with Searchlight. Then it was a nose ahead. But that was all. Searchlight moved forward, inching *her* nose ahead. Then the Samoyed regained the lead. Then Searchlight...

When you enter the town of Jackson on South Road, the first buildings come into view about a half a mile away. Whether Searchlight took those buildings to be Grandfather's farmhouse again, no one can be sure, but it was at this time that she poured on the steam.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Well, right now Searchlight and the Samoyed are going neck to neck in the race. I hope Little Willy will win the race.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Little Willy's sled seemed to lift up off the ground and fly. Stone Fox was left behind.

The crowd cheered madly when they saw little Willy come into view at the far end of Main Street, and even more madly when they saw that Stone Fox was right on his tail.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

Searchlight forged ahead. But Stone Fox was gaining!

"Go, Searchlight! Go!" little Willy cried out.

Searchlight gave it everything she had.

She was a hundred feet from the finish line when her heart burst. She died instantly. There was no suffering.

The sled and little Willy tumbled over her, slid along the snow for a while, then came to a stop about ten feet from the finish line. It had started to snow — white snowflakes landed on Searchlight's dark fur as she lay motionless on the ground.

The crowd became deathly silent.

Stone Fox brought his sled to a stop alongside little Willy. He stood tall in the icy wind and looked down at the young challenger, and at the dog that lay limp in his arms.

"Is she dead, Mr. Stone Fox? Is she dead?" little Willy asked, looking up at Stone Fox with his one good eye.

Stone Fox knelt down and put one massive hand on Searchlight's chest. He felt no heartbeat. He looked at little Willy, and the boy understood.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

I agree with the croud, I don't want Stone Fox to win the race. That was very sad, that Searchlight died. why did you have to make her die John Gardiner?

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

I like the way the author put this "He just stood there Like a mountain

Little Willy squeezed Searchlight with all his might. "You did real good, girl. Real good. I'm real proud of you. You rest now. Just rest." Little Willy began to brush the snow off Searchlight's back.

Stone Fox stood up slowly.

No one spoke. No one moved. All eyes were on the Indian, the one called Stone Fox, the one who had never lost a race, and who now had another victory within his grasp.

But Stone Fox did nothing.

He just stood there. Like a mountain.

After You Have Read

1. What feelings do you have about what happens in the story?

I was really happy when he saw his Grandpa in the window. I was sad when Searchlight died I would have cried if I were Little Willy.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

2. Select a line or lines from the story that interest you or make you think.

   Write the line or lines in the box below.

> Little Willy's sled seemed to lift up off the ground and fly.

Tell why you chose these lines.

I chose these lines because, I know you can't fly. But I like the way it sounds. I can just see it lift up off the ground and feel like it is flying.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

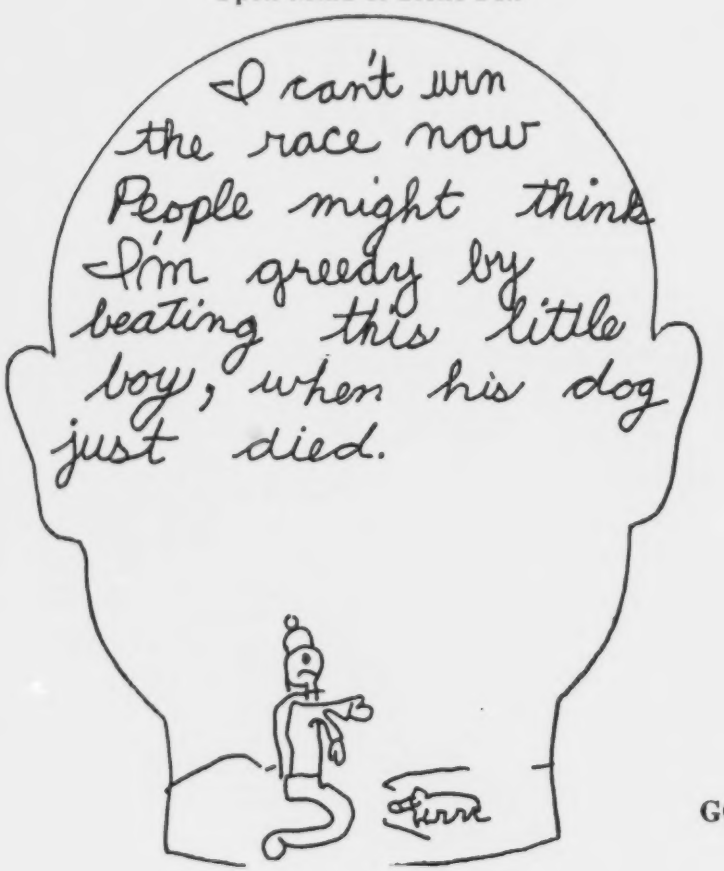
3. Read these lines from the story again:

> **But Stone Fox did nothing.**
> **He just stood there. Like a mountain.**

What do you think Stone Fox might have been thinking and feeling as he stood there?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of Stone Fox's head. If you could look into the mind of Stone Fox, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of Stone Fox



GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of Stone Fox mean to you.

He is standing there looking sad because Little Willy can't win the race, I think he didn't move because he probaly thought it was unfair for him to win the race when Little Willy couldn't

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

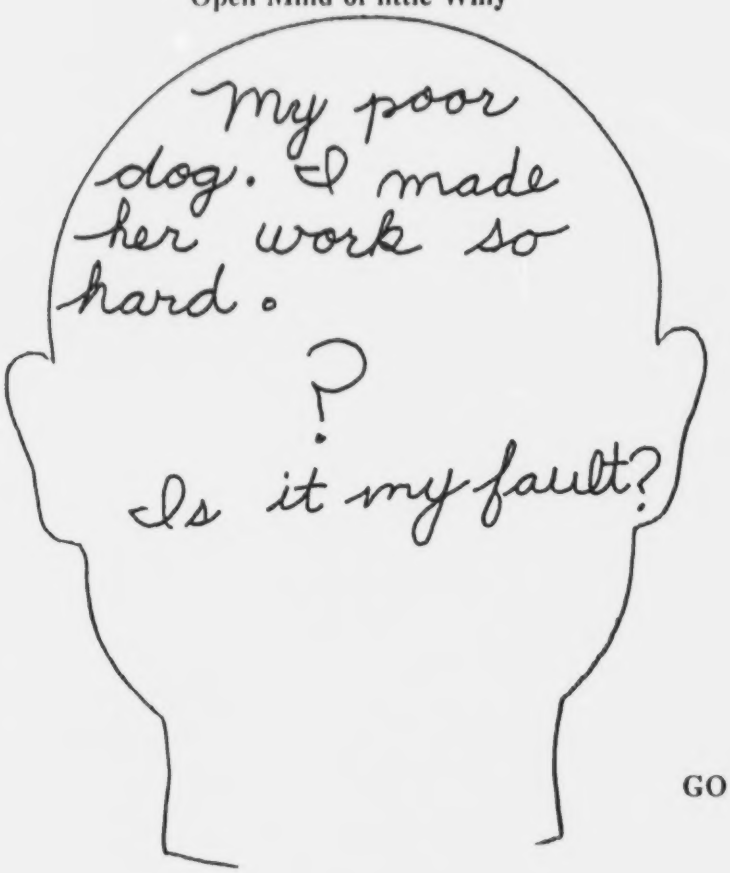
4. Read these lines from the story again:

> **Little Willy squeezed Searchlight**
> **with all his might.**

What do you think little Willy might have been thinking and feeling as he held Searchlight?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of little Willy's head. If you could look into the mind of little Willy, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of little Willy



GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of little Willy mean to you.

They mean, little Willy's wondering if he made Searchlight die, by telling her Go, Go, Go.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(continued)*

5. Go back and read the last two lines of the story and write what you think is going to happen next.

I think Stone Fox will let Little Willy win with his dogs because he felt sorry for him.

What in the story makes you think that it will end this way?

That Little Willy wanted to help his grandfather Maybe Stone Fox knew that and wanted him to win. That's probaly why Little Willy was winning from the start.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – High-range Performance *(concluded)*

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

This reminds me of three things. One is a book called Woodsong which is about a man that is in a race with his dogs. Two is another book called Dogsong its about a boy and some dogs. Three a movie called "White Fang" about a boy who cared for a dog.

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for High-range Reading Performance

Readers demonstrating a high range of performance are discerning and insightful as they construct and reflect on meaning in a text. They go far beyond a restatement of the passage and give clear evidence of having interpreted the passage through extending or speculating about textual ideas.

When children begin to read a story such as *Stone Fox*, they actively engage in building and exploring a "textworld." Exceptional readers of literature, according to Louise Rosenblatt, weave "a web of feelings, sensations, images, ideas" between themselves and the text. We can watch as this reader moves in and out of that "web." In the reader's first annotation, she appraises the text, "I like the way the author wrote this. He gives me excitement." The second annotation in the margin reflects her involvement and engagement with the text, "Well right now Searchlight and the Samoyed are going neck to neck in the race." She ends her annotation looking ahead at what she wishes will happen next, " I hope Little Willy will win the race."

In her third margin note, the reader continues her dialogue with the author, agreeing, disagreeing, and making strong personal connections to the textworld. "I agree with the crowd. I don't want Stone Fox to win the race." She ends her comments with a question that expresses the depth of her emotional engagement in the story, "Why did you have to make her die John Gardiner?" The reader is confidently questioning the author behind the text.

The reader's response to question one is a powerful emotional response. She feels empathy towards Willy—"I would have cried if I were Little Willy." As a child who reads with unusual sensitivity to language, she explains her choice of a line from the text: ". . . I like the way it sounds. I can just see it [Willy's sled] lift up off the ground and feel like it is flying." She is willing to suspend belief: "I know you can't fly but I like the way it sounds."

The reader has filled the first graphic in question three with both words and drawings. The drawing supports Stone Fox's imagined words: "I can't win the race now." The explanation that follows shows a perceptive reader who is standing apart from the text and speculating about Stone Fox's motivation, "I think he didn't move because he probably thought it was unfair for him to win the race when Little Willy couldn't."

The second graphic in question four gives evidence that the reader can picture the story from Little Willy's viewpoint and extend her thinking beyond the surface of the text. In the center of the Open Mind is a large symbolic "?" that ties to the question "Is it my fault?" The explanations of the words and symbols show a reader who has used cues from the passage ("go, go, go") to construct an insightful analysis of Little Willy's dilemma as he wonders "if he made Searchlight die . . . ."

In questions five and six the reader demonstrates a mental activity characteristic of good readers—filling gaps in the text. She speculates that Stone Fox knew that Willy wanted to help his Grandfather and thus "wanted him to win. That's probably why Little Willy was winning from the start." She has drawn a plausible interpretation from subtle cues.

Discerning readers develop connections with and among texts. This reader's last response shows an intertextual connection between *Stone Fox* and other texts. The connections between "*Woodsong*," " *Dogsong*, and *White Fang*" center on the similarities of topics between pieces, "man and a race, boy and a dog, and a "boy who cared for a dog."

Generally, this reader exhibits many of the hallmarks of the exceptional reader of literature.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance

Time to Read

STONE FOX

As they approached the farmhouse, little Willy thought he saw someone in Grandfather's bedroom window. It was difficult to see with only one good eye. The someone was a man. With a full beard.

It couldn't be. But it was! It was Grandfather!

Grandfather was sitting up in bed. He was looking out the window.

Little Willy was so excited he couldn't think straight. He started to stop the sled, but Grandfather indicated no, waving him on. "Of course," little Willy said to himself. "I must finish the race. I haven't won yet."

"Go, Searchlight!" little Willy shrieked.

"Go, girl!"

Grandfather was better. Tears of joy rolled down little Willy's smiling face. Everything was going to be all right.

And then Stone Fox made his move.

One by one he began to pass the other racers. He went from last place to eighth. Then from eighth place to seventh. Then from seventh to sixth. Sixth to fifth.

He passed the others as if they were standing still.

He went from fifth place to fourth. Then to third. Then to second.

Until only little Willy remained.

But little Willy still had a good lead. In fact, it was not until the last two miles of the race that

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Why did Willy only have one good eye?

What did grandfather have? How old was Searchlight? How old. is Stone Fox? How old was Willy? how long did Lille Willy have Searchlight?

GO ON

John R. Gardiner. *Stone Fox*. New York: Thomas Y Crowell, 1980. Text © 1980 by John Reynold Gardiner.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Stone Fox got his first glimpse of little Willy since the race had begun.

The five Samoyeds looked magnificent as they moved effortlessly across the snow. Stone Fox was gaining, and he was gaining fast. And little Willy wasn't aware of it.

Look back, little Willy! Look Back!

But little Willy didn't look back. He was busy thinking about Grandfather. He could hear him laughing...and playing his harmonica...

Finally little Willy glanced back over his shoulder. He couldn't believe what he saw! Stone Fox was nearly on top of him!

This made little Willy mad. Mad at himself. Why hadn't he looked back more often? What was he doing? He hadn't won yet. Well, no time to think of that now.

He had a race to win.

"Go, Searchlight! Go, girl!"

But Stone Fox kept gaining. Silently. Steadily.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

The lead Samoyed passed little Willy and pulled up even with Searchlight. Then it was a nose ahead. But that was all. Searchlight moved forward, inching *her* nose ahead. Then the Samoyed regained the lead. Then Searchlight...

When you enter the town of Jackson on South Road, the first buildings come into view about a half a mile away. Whether Searchlight took those buildings to be Grandfather's farmhouse again, no one can be sure, but it was at this time that she poured on the steam.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

How long was the dog sled race?

Who was saing look back litte Willy look back?

W aw there any snow? where they rudding on a Street?

What dose poure steam mean?

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Little Willy's sled seemed to lift up off the ground and fly. Stone Fox was left behind.

The crowd cheered madly when they saw little Willy come into view at the far end of Main Street, and even more madly when they saw that Stone Fox was right on his tail.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

Searchlight forged ahead. But Stone Fox was gaining!

"Go, Searchlight! Go!" little Willy cried out.

Searchlight gave it everything she had.

She was a hundred feet from the finish line when her heart burst. She died instantly. There was no suffering.

The sled and little Willy tumbled over her, slid along the snow for a while, then came to a stop about ten feet from the finish line. It had started to snow — white snowflakes landed on Searchlight's dark fur as she lay motionless on the ground.

The crowd became deathly silent.

Stone Fox brought his sled to a stop alongside little Willy. He stood tall in the icy wind and looked down at the young challenger, and at the dog that lay limp in his arms.

"Is she dead, Mr. Stone Fox? Is she dead?" little Willy asked, looking up at Stone Fox with his one good eye.

Stone Fox knelt down and put one massive hand on Searchlight's chest. He felt no heartbeat. He looked at little Willy, and the boy understood.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

How could little Willy go fast with only one dog? I don't like the part when Searchlight had a heart burst. I think you should say that She went to the vet and got all better.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Little Willy squeezed Searchlight with all his might. "You did real good, girl. Real good. I'm real proud of you. You rest now. Just rest." Little Willy began to brush the snow off Searchlight's back.

Stone Fox stood up slowly.

No one spoke. No one moved. All eyes were on the Indian, the one called Stone Fox, the one who had never lost a race, and who now had another victory within his grasp.

But Stone Fox did nothing.

He just stood there. Like a mountain.

After You Have Read

1. What feelings do you have about what happens in the story?

I really don't like the part when Searchlight died because I really love dogs and every other animals and I don't like sad storys about animals dying and I want all animals to live. I do not like this story.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

2. Select a line or lines from the story that interest you or make you think.

   Write the line or lines in the box below.

Grandfather was sitting up in bed He was looking out the window Grandfather was all better.

Tell why you chose these lines.

I like those lines because it tells me about somebody getting better or recovering I like it when sombody is getting better I don't like it when sombody is dying. I gets very angry at somone who has killed somone or somthing and I whish didnt.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

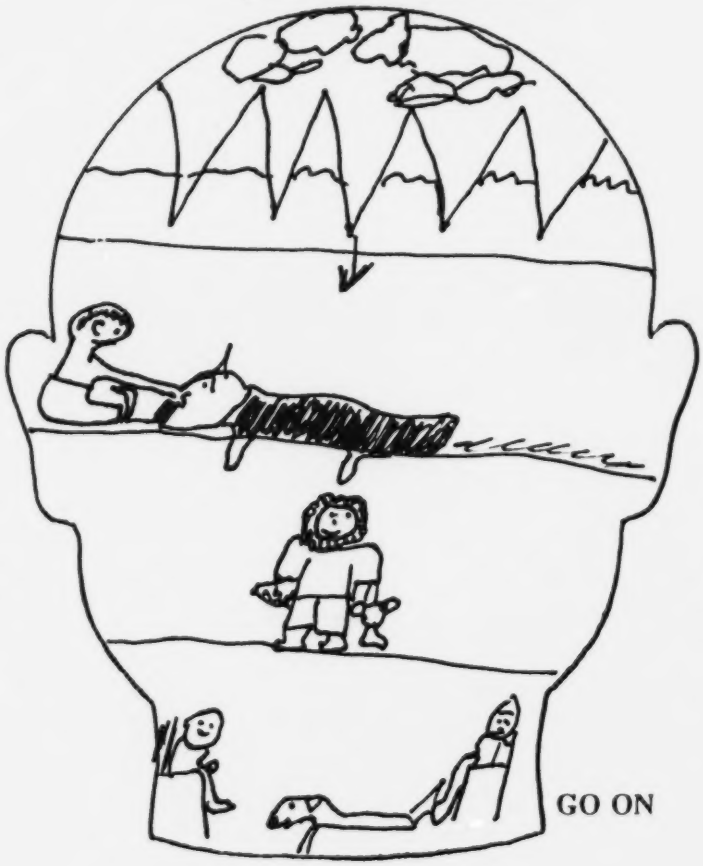
3. Read these lines from the story again:

> **But Stone Fox did nothing.**
> **He just stood there. Like a mountain.**

What do you think Stone Fox might have been thinking and feeling as he stood there?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of Stone Fox's head. If you could look into the mind of Stone Fox, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of Stone Fox



GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of Stone Fox mean to you.

The first pitcher shows still mountains. The next pitcher shows powr. Searchlight laing on the grownd The next pitcher shows him wining the money and the last pitcher show Wilby and his powr grandfather sitting at home.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

4. Read these lines from the story again:

> **Little Willy squeezed Searchlight**
> **with all his might.**

What do you think little Willy might have been thinking and feeling as he held Searchlight?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of little Willy's head. If you could look into the mind of little Willy, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of little Willy

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(continued)*

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of little Willy mean to you.

My pitcher shows pour Willy and Searchlight on the ground and Willy is hugging pour ded Searchlight And he was crying verery hard.

5. Go back and read the last two lines of the story and write what you think is going to happen next.

I think that there going to take Searchlight to a baring grownd and barey him, and then Stone Fox gave the moneY to the grandfather and the bought another dog like Searchlight. and saved the farm.

What in the story makes you think that it will end this way?

I think that it will end that way because Searchlight all ready deed but I wished she dident.

Student Reading Response – Mid-range Performance *(concluded)*

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

I loved the up untill Searchlight died. I really liked the part when Willy saw a figer in the window it evar grandpa. he is sitting up in bed he is all better.

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Mid-range Reading Performance

Children demonstrating a middle level of performance read passages literally. They construct plausible and sometimes thoughtful but not insightful interpretations of the text.

Throughout the passage, the reader has chosen to fill her margins. Her questions in the margins demonstrate clearly that she is interacting with the story but her queries are superficial, embedded tightly in the literal facts of the text, e.g., "How old was Searchlight/Stone Fox/Little Willy? Who was saying look back Little Willy? Was there any snow?"

Later in her margin notes, the reader continues by thoughtfully questioning, "How could Little Willy go fast with only one dog?" and evaluating the text, "I don't like the part when . . . ." She suggests an alternative ending to the piece: "I think you should say that She whent to the vet and got all better." While the reader's suggested happy ending is naive and simplistic, the sense of self necessary to challenge the ending is generally a sign of a fairly strong reader.

The reader's initial response to question one evidences a personal connection. Although she has found a parallel in her prior knowledge and experience that matches her reading, her connection to the text remains superficial and simplistic: "I really don't like the part when Searchlight died because I really love dogs. I don't like sad storys about animals dying and I want all animals to live. I do not like this story." We see a similar response in question two where the reader selects a passage simply "because it tells me about somebody getting better . . . ." The reader shows little inclination to reflect on the story beyond the literal events.

The reader has divided the first graphic of Stone Fox (question three) into four sections. Section one "shows still mountain," perhaps an association with "He just stood there. Like a mountain" the situation posed in the question. If we assume that the other pictures are represented chronologically, we see an echo of the events that she imagined earlier as an alternative ending for the story, "I think you should say that She whent to the vet and got all better." According to the reader, the pictures show "pour Searchlight laying on the grownd . . . him wining the money and . . . Willy and his pour Grandfather sitting at home" (in the company of a recovered Searchlight).

In the second graphic (question four), the reader returns to the events of the story centering on Searchlight's death. In question five she speculates that Searchlight will be buried, Stone Fox will give the money to grandfather, and the farm will be saved. She continues to express a frustration with the events of the story, "Searchlight all ready died but I wished she dident."

In the reader's final response she reiterates her simplistic evaluation of the story. Although she shows little awareness of the nuances and complexities of the text, she has clearly understood the gist of the story and shows some movement toward a more insightful reading. She also raises questions and challenges the author, indications of a more thoughtful reader than most of her responses reveal.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance

Time to Read

STONE FOX

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

As they approached the farmhouse, little Willy thought he saw someone in Grandfather's bedroom window. It was difficult to see with only one good eye. The someone was a man. With a full beard.

It couldn't be. But it was! It was Grandfather!

Grandfather was sitting up in bed. He was looking out the window.

Little Willy was so excited he couldn't think straight. He started to stop the sled, but Grandfather indicated no, waving him on. "Of course," little Willy said to himself. "I must finish the race. I haven't won yet."

"Go, Searchlight!" little Willy shrieked.

"Go, girl!"

Grandfather was better. Tears of joy rolled down little Willy's smiling face. Everything was going to be all right.

And then Stone Fox made his move.

One by one he began to pass the other racers. He went from last place to eighth. Then from eighth place to seventh. Then from seventh to sixth. Sixth to fifth.

He passed the others as if they were standing still.

He went from fifth place to fourth. Then to third. Then to second.

Until only little Willy remained.

But little Willy still had a good lead. In fact, it was not until the last two miles of the race that

GO ON

John R. Gardiner. *Stone Fox*. New York: Thomas Y Crowell, 1980. Text © 1980 by John Reynold Gardiner.

Student Reading Response - Low-range Performance *(continued)*

Stone Fox got his first glimpse of little Willy since the race had begun.

The five Samoyeds looked magnificent as they moved effortlessly across the snow. Stone Fox was gaining, and he was gaining fast. And little Willy wasn't aware of it.

Look back, little Willy! Look Back!

But little Willy didn't look back. He was busy thinking about Grandfather. He could hear him laughing...and playing his harmonica...

Finally little Willy glanced back over his shoulder. He couldn't believe what he saw! Stone Fox was nearly on top of him!

This made little Willy mad. Mad at himself. Why hadn't he looked back more often? What was he doing? He hadn't won yet. Well, no time to think of that now.

He had a race to win.

"Go, Searchlight! Go, girl!"

But Stone Fox kept gaining. Silently. Steadily.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

The lead Samoyed passed little Willy and pulled up even with Searchlight. Then it was a nose ahead. But that was all. Searchlight moved forward, inching *her* nose ahead. Then the Samoyed regained the lead. Then Searchlight...

When you enter the town of Jackson on South Road, the first buildings come into view about a half a mile away. Whether Searchlight took those buildings to be Grandfather's farmhouse again, no one can be sure, but it was at this time that she poured on the steam.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

I would be nervis if I had a race. And I wonder why he was mad I thingk wile read the story

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

Little Willy's sled seemed to lift up off the ground and fly. Stone Fox was left behind.

The crowd cheered madly when they saw little Willy come into view at the far end of Main Street, and even more madly when they saw that Stone Fox was right on his tail.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

Searchlight forged ahead. But Stone Fox was gaining!

"Go, Searchlight! Go!" little Willy cried out.

Searchlight gave it everything she had.

She was a hundred feet from the finish line when her heart burst. She died instantly. There was no suffering.

The sled and little Willy tumbled over her, slid along the snow for a while, then came to a stop about ten feet from the finish line. It had started to snow — white snowflakes landed on Searchlight's dark fur as she lay motionless on the ground.

The crowd became deathly silent.

Stone Fox brought his sled to a stop alongside little Willy. He stood tall in the icy wind and looked down at the young challenger, and at the dog that lay limp in his arms.

"Is she dead, Mr. Stone Fox? Is she dead?" little Willy asked, looking up at Stone Fox with his one good eye.

Stone Fox knelt down and put one massive hand on Searchlight's chest. He felt no heartbeat. He looked at little Willy, and the boy understood.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

I bet if was in a race my own mother will be shouthen of me.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Little Willy squeezed Searchlight with all his might. "You did real good, girl. Real good. I'm real proud of you. You rest now. Just rest." Little Willy began to brush the snow off Searchlight's back.

Stone Fox stood up slowly.

No one spoke. No one moved. All eyes were on the Indian, the one called Stone Fox, the one who had never lost a race, and who now had another victory within his grasp.

But Stone Fox did nothing.

He just stood there. Like a mountain.

After You Have Read

1. What feelings do you have about what happens in the story?

My feelings will be thired of the race And be proud of my self.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

2. Select a line or lines from the story that interest you or make you think.

   Write the line or lines in the box below.

Tell why you chose these lines.

Whil I think stown fox was a proud and a happy person.

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

3. Read these lines from the story again:

> **But Stone Fox did nothing.**
> **He just stood there. Like a mountain.**

What do you think Stone Fox might have been thinking and feeling as he stood there?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of Stone Fox's head. If you could look into the mind of Stone Fox, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of Stone Fox mean to you.

I put peopls stuby down and lookpen at the race people and Stonefox shin down like a monthen!

GO ON

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

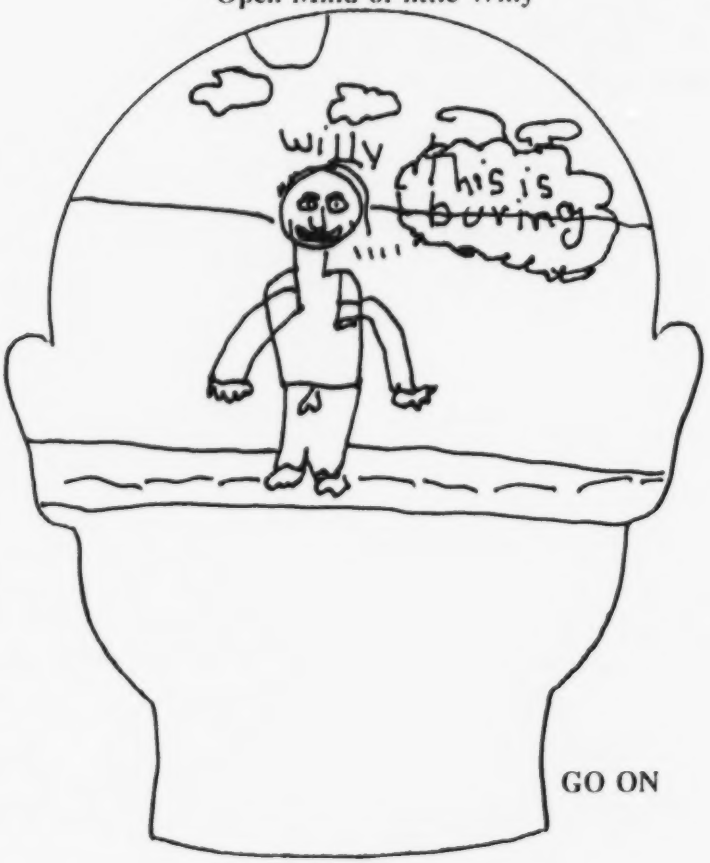
4. Read these lines from the story again:

> **Little Willy squeezed Searchlight**
> **with all his might.**

What do you think little Willy might have been thinking and feeling as he held Searchlight?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of little Willy's head. If you could look into the mind of little Willy, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of little Willy



GO ON

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(continued)*

5. Go back and read the last two lines of the story and write what you think is going to happen next.

I think willy is gowing to run wher he like a car. like did the first thim

What in the story makes you think that it will end this way?

I tink it will end will will get stere for to run in third shiter ther life a mentheu.

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of little Willy mean to you.

Whill I said that willy was shring that this is horwig. And herwig hche to run

Student Reading Response – Low-range Performance *(concluded)*

This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Low-range Reading Performance

Children demonstrating a limited reading performance evidence difficulty making coherent meaning from what they read. They may become entangled in the selection and consequently construct a partial and reductive meaning for the text. They give no evidence of seeing the text as a whole and focus instead on one or two segments of the text.

This reader's margin notes indicate that he recognizes some ideas but his responses to these ideas have only tangential relevance to the text. "I would be sad if my Grandfather was ill. I would be nervous if I had a race. I bet if was in a race my own mother will be shothen (shouting)." Again, his response to question one, "My feelings will be thired (tired) of the race and be proud of my self," continues to express his identification with Little Willy in a tangential way.

The graphics provide evidence that the reader envisioned the sled race as a foot race. The first graphic in question three shows a foot race with a crowd of people watching followed by a scene depicting Stone Fox relaxing with a soda after the race: "I put people shilh (sitting) down and lookhen (looking) at the race people and ston fox shin (sitting) down like a monthen (mountain)." The second graphic (in question four) shows Willy on a track thinking "This is boring." We aren't sure what it is that Willy thinks is "boring." In question five, the reader speculates that "Willy is gowing to run ughen (again)" and that "Willy will get stone fox to run " instead of sitting there like a mountain. Although the graphics are detailed, they show little relevance to the story.

In general, this paper reveals a reader who has reacted to small details (race, mountain) while not grasping the overall gist of the passage.

III. Elementary Writing Assessment

The grade four writing assessment is designed to reflect a variety of purposes for which children write. Since the assessment is also designed to reflect current theory and professionally well-informed practice as defined by California's *English-Language Arts Framework*, it acknowledges that expressive writing provides the foundation for all other kinds of writing. Expressive writing (*"This is what I see, think, and feel. . . "*) is therefore the primary type emphasized in the grade four assessment .

Recognizing, however, that children at grade four are experimenting widely with different purposes for writing, the assessment includes three additional categories that evolve from and build on expressive writing, each differentiated by the writer's purpose: persuasive writing (*"This is what I believe and why I think you should believe it . . ."*); narrative writing (*This is what happened . . ."*); and informational writing (*"This is what I know and how I know it . . ."*). Certain kinds of writing essential to good writing programs (poetry and drama, for example) are not assessed here only because they cannot be assessed adequately within the time constraints of this assessment.

This assessment assumes that all good writing shares certain common qualities. It is fluent and coherent. It reveals both clarity of thought as well as genuine voice. It contains appropriate sensory and concrete details, lively language, and word choices appropriate to the topic. There is also considerable overlap among the rhetorical types selected for assessment. Effective writers, for instance, often use narrative strategies and personal anecdotes, thoughts, and feelings to persuade or inform as well as to tell a story or express their personal ideas or observations. The scoring guides accommodate these shared, often overlapping, features.

During the transition year of 1992-1993, only expressive and persuasive writing will be assessed. As additional materials are developed, the Department of Education will make them available.

Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide for Expressive Writing

"This is what I see, think, and feel . . ."

Dealing with observations, ideas, feelings, and memories, expressive writing is a natural kind of writing which is often close to speech. It may describe a scene or focus on the personal significance of a person, object or memory. It includes writing that is done for the self, like diary or journal entries, as well as pieces like personal letters or reflective passages intended to be read by friends. Because the audience may be the writer's self or an outside reader, purposes for creating expressive pieces vary widely. These purposes may be descriptive, reflective, or exploratory in nature; they often incorporate narrative strategies, using either first or third person. When composing for an audience, these writers may shape their material to engage readers and to convey a vivid impression of thoughts, remembered images or feelings, and the significance of their perceptions.

Expressive writing provides a foundation for all the other, more formal kinds of writing. It is the precursor for the more specific types of writing assessed in grades eight and ten. Its importance developmentally for fourth grade writers cannot be overemphasized because it allows young writers to use writing as a way to develop fluency, discover and clarify what they think as well as grow in their ability to perceive and reflect. Elementary teachers facilitate this development when they have students keep journals and writer's notebooks, and when they give students the responsibility for choosing their own topics in a writing workshop situation.

Expressive writing prompts are intended to reflect the kinds of writing students do in the classroom. They might, for example, ask students to select a favorite toy and reflect on why and in what ways this toy is important to them. Another prompt might ask students to write about something that they often think about—perhaps when they lie in bed at night, or when they daydream.

Score Point 6 – Exceptional Performance

Fluency. The writer of a six-point paper demonstrates ease and facility in expressing ideas, observations, and feelings. The writing flows smoothly and naturally, and is understandable. It remains generally focused on the topic, but may digress. If there is a shift to another topic, the shift is logical and easy to follow.

Exploration of Ideas. The writing shows an exploration of ideas which the writer finds interesting or provocative. The writer appears to be engaged in the process and is willing to take risks and reshape these ideas. The writing conveys a vivid impression of thoughts, feelings, and images through the use of details. It often demonstrates insightful and reflective thinking, either by direct statement or implication.

Voice/style. The writer uses lively and concrete language appropriate to writer's purpose. He or she writes personally and naturally, often in a conversational tone. Sentence structure and length are varied as appropriate to the writer's purpose.

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Score Point 5 – Commendable Performance

Fluency. The writer of a five-point paper demonstrates ease and facility in expressing ideas, observations, and feelings. The writing flows smoothly and naturally and is understandable, perhaps showing somewhat less control than in a six-point paper. It remains generally focused on the topic, but may digress. Shifts in thought may not be quite as easy to follow as in a six-point paper.

Exploration of Ideas. As in a six-point paper the writing also shows development of ideas that strike the writer as interesting or provocative, but may create a less vivid impression of thoughts and feelings. The writer is engaged in exploring ideas, but may be less willing to take risks or to reshape these ideas. The writing may also demonstrate insightful and reflective thinking. These insights can be either implied or stated, but will demonstrate less acute awareness than in a six-point paper.

Voice/style. The writer uses lively and concrete language appropriate to the paper's purpose, with less sophistication than a six-point paper. The writing is conversational and natural. Varied sentence structure shows perhaps less flair than in a six-point paper.

Score Point 4 – Proficient Performance

Fluency. The writer of a four-point paper demonstrates proficiency in expressing ideas, observations, and feelings. The writing is generally understandable and coherent, but lacks the complete control shown by the writer of a five- or six-point paper. The focus may shift and be somewhat difficult to follow.

Exploration of Ideas. This writer develops ideas in a somewhat predictable fashion but shows some engagement in exploring thoughts. He or she may attempt to convey interesting thinking or a vivid impression, but fails to develop ideas fully. The writing may show some evidence of insightful and reflective thinking.

Voice/style. For the most part, this writer uses commonplace language. He or she writes personally, naturally, and with simplicity. The writer rarely varies sentence structure, but handles simple constructions well. Sentences may be plodding and pedestrian.

Score Point 3 – Minimally Proficient Performance

Fluency. The writer of the three-point paper demonstrates difficulty in expressing ideas. The writer may construct rambling sentences or listings, is sometimes confused, and frequently presents an unfocused collection of generalized details.

Exploration of Ideas. This writer develops few ideas and thoughts and usually shows little engagement in exploring ideas. He or she makes weak or ineffective attempts to convey thinking or vivid impressions. The writing rarely shows evidence of insightful or reflective thinking.

Voice/style. This writer may use simple or run together sentences with little sentence variety. The writing shows some lack of control of sentence structure. The paper is written in a flat, uninvolved voice.

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Score Point 2 – Limited Performance

Fluency. The writer of a two-point paper demonstrates halting, fragmented expression of ideas. The writing often seems unconnected and somewhat incoherent. It is brief, thin, or insubstantial.

Exploration of Ideas. This writer barely develops ideas and thoughts, often relying merely on the title or a single word. He or she demonstrates little engagement in exploring ideas. The writing shows little or no evidence of insightful or reflective thinking.

Voice/style. This writer uses highly simplistic language (primer prose) and limited word choice. The writing shows little control of basic sentence structure.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Performance

Fluency. The writer demonstrates little or no evidence of fluency and little or no coherence. The writing may be garbled and impossible to understand, except for occasional words or phrases.

Exploration of Ideas. This writer barely develops ideas and thoughts, often relying merely on the title or a single word. There is no evidence of insightful or reflective thinking.

Voice/style. Language and sentence structure may be confused or garbled; word choice is meager or sometimes erroneous.

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

My special place has always been Mexico. Most of my family was born there and my grandma lives there so when ever I vist whitch is every summer I can stay with my grandma.

It is so beautifull and peacefull there! There is never a robery or gun fight there! Everyone knows each other and where they live so. if someone gets lost a person will help!

T.J. is the first part of Mexico and the uglyest part! The farther you go into Mexico the prettyer it gets! The part of Mexico that I'm talking about is called Wadalajda. It's Located almost in the center of Mexico!

Winter is my favorite sesson in Mexico because they have penyotas everyday until christmas is over. If you could vist Mexico and see

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

for your self what it looks like
your too would say it's beauttyfull.!
It has the most beauttyfull rivers
and montans. It rains everyday over
there thats why its so special
to me.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

This writer speaks conversationally and naturally about a personally significant subject and demonstrates an ease and facility in expressing her ideas. This is not a report on Mexico.

The writer first focuses primarily on the emotional climate of her trips to Mexico. Children who live in California see on television and sometimes even experience in their own neighborhoods "robberies and gunfights." This child shows an insight into her own community, contrasting it to "the part of Mexico I'm talking about" where it is "peacefull" and by implication, safe. "There is never a robery or gun fight there! Everyone knows each other and where they live so if someone gets lost a person will help!" Such reflective thinking is a hallmark of expressive writing.

Another important feature of expressive writing is that it is exploratory in nature. While the strength of the piece is in conveying the emotional ("beauttyfull and peaceful") aspect of this place, the writer explores the physical qualities as well. She explores the multiple meanings of "beauttyfull." In describing Mexico, she initially talks about how "beauttyfull" it is. Further along, she acknowledges that Tijuana is "the first part of Mexico and the uglyest part," but then returns to the idea that "the farther you go into Mexico the prettyer it gets!"

Sincerely exploring ideas requires risk taking. This writer takes risks in inventing the spelling of unfamiliar words whereas another less confident writer would restrict vocabulary choice to only those words he or she could correctly spell.

This writer conveys a vivid impression of remembered thoughts, feelings and images of her many visits to this special place in an insightful and reflective way which makes it an exemplary paper.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

When I'm all alone I feel let down. I feel like I'm not wanted. I feel that way when I'm by myself.

Sometimes...when I am alone I practice the splits and back-walk-overs. That makes me feel good about myself as if nobody in the world could do it too! Some times I read or listen to music. When I read a book it makes me feel like I'm in the book. Or when I listen to music, I sometimes dance to it or sing it or just listen too it! If I am still alone, I feel better about myself after I do those things. I have had alot of experiences of when I'm all alone. I think that it's alright for a person to be alone for a while but not for ever! I've learned that if I'm not alone sometimes I'll be grumpy all the time!!

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

This strong paper gives the reader a vivid impression of the writer's thoughts and feelings at the moment of composition. It demonstrates ease and facility in the expression of ideas. The writing flows smoothly and naturally.

What makes it an exemplar, however, is that this paper demonstrates two important aspects of expressive writing—it explores an idea and takes a risk. By focusing and reflecting on the subject of being alone, this writer appears at the end to have discovered that what she thought at first isn't what she really thinks. She begins by stating, "When I'm all alone I feel let down. I feel not wanted." However, after exploring the many things she does, thinks about and feels when alone, (e.g., "doing back-walk-overs . . . feel[ing] like I'm in [a] book . . .") she concludes with the discovery, "I think that it's alright for a person to be alone for awhile, but not for ever. I've learned that if I'm not alone sometimes I'll be grumpy all the time."

Throughout the piece, this writer engages in a sincere exploration of an idea and takes a risk by reshaping her original thinking.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

My best friend likes to play sports. She plays baseball, soccer, basketball, gymnastics, and swimming.

Her hobbies are spieing, taking long walks, eating candy, and playing with her bird. I do them all with her.

She has brown hair and brown eyes. She is tall and she has a bird, a cat and a dog.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

She is my best friend because she helps me with problems. She cares about me.

Our friendship is special because she lets me come over any time and talk. She answers my questions. She tells me everything that happens to her.

In the 1st grade we met. We've faught a few times but worked it out. We help each other clean our rooms. We make my little sister mad by messing up her barbie house. I hope we'll be together until we die.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

Here is a proficient, but pedestrian account of a friendship. In the opening sentence the writer briefly, but clearly, establishes the focus for her writing—"my best friend." What follows is an elaborated list of her friend's qualities interspersed with some reflection on what makes the two girls such good friends. The paper is fluent and generally coherent. Shifts in flow are easy to follow but contribute to the rather plodding effect of the whole piece.

Ideas are presented in a predictable fashion: what the best friend likes to do, what she looks like, and why the friendship is important. The writer attempts to provide insight into the significance of the friendship, but is able to do so only on a superficial level, "she helps me with my problems . . . she cares about me . . . she lets me come over any time." A glimpse of the memorable times the two friends share is alluded to when the writer says, "We make my little sister mad by messing up her barbie house," but no additional information on the importance of the memory is forthcoming.

Language throughout the paper is natural, but simple, and sentence structure rarely varies from the commonplace subject/verb construction. An attempt to express real emotional significance comes in the last sentence, "I hope we will be together until we die."

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

My most favorite place to be is my fort. I always go there when I don't feel good. My fort is cozy. It has a long slide and a short latter. It also has a small sandbox under it. I also put an inflatable boat as a couch in side. I have done many things im my fort. I have eaten, slept, and had lots of fun. That is my most favorite place to be.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

The opening sentence of this paper establishes the context for the writing, "My favorite place to be is my fort." The last sentence reiterates the writer's feelings about his fort, and in-between the writer elaborates on why the fort is important to him.

Although the writer elaborates in a predictable and generally uninspired fashion, he explains clearly the attributes of the fort. It is "cozy" because it has a "long slide . . . short ladder," and "a couch inside." The writer tells us "I have done many things in my fort," followed by a clear, but unelaborated list of specific activities. The writer has insight, but it is not profound.

The writer's voice and style is commonplace and sentence structure varies little. He sends a coherent message as to why the fort is his favorite place to be, but only on a simplistic level.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

I had to can and kice the ball to make a goal. When I cleed can I make a goal of $22.20 to make the arther oline.

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

A hallmark of a minimal performance is its brevity and lack of coherence. This writer is responding to the word "goal," but it is not clear what meaning the word has for her (a soccer goal or an accomplishment). Undecipherable words and the overall brevity of the piece prevents the reader from understanding the writer's intentions. This writer would profit from continual opportunities to write so that an ease and fluency of expression will develop.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

ones upon a time I got cauht cauht I was sopos to get Nouns and I got some shoes and I got cauht. I was in the mall and my mother was in their and sss. saw mew and that how I got cauht

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

This writer uses a formulaic opening, "once upon a time" to open the piece and orient the reader to an incident when, "I got caught," but the halting, fragmented expression of ideas makes it difficult to follow. Though ideas are connected and focused, there is not much exploration of ideas. This writer clearly has an interesting story to tell and continued practice elaborating on these ideas will help improve performance with this type of writing.

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Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide for Persuasive Writing

"This is what I believe, and why I think you should believe it . . ."

Persuasive writing requires students to choose positions, to make judgments, to offer proposals, and to argue convincingly for their beliefs and ideas. However, some students may choose to explore both sides of an issue and then offer a compromise, a third position, or some other satisfactorily persuasive closure. Effective writers use evidence such as examples or anecdotes to support their arguments. Convincing arguments may appeal to logic, emotions, and/or philosophical beliefs.

Persuasive writers establish themselves as informed, knowledgeable individuals. They orient readers by describing the subject, giving background information to focus the writing. More than any other kind of writing, argument requires writers to consider their audience. Writers continue to be aware of readers throughout the piece, perhaps referring to them directly, acknowledging their objections and reservations, or trying to enlist their support. The best persuasive writers systematically develop arguments with a strong sense of coherence and movement throughout the piece.

Teachers can build on elementary students' many strong opinions and natural propensity for arguing their points of view by encouraging them to present arguments orally in class, as well as write letters, editorials, and articles on any controversial issue currently being discussed in class. At the fourth grade level, persuasive writing is a precursor to the more specific writing types assessed in grades eight and ten: Problem/Solution, Evaluation, Controversial Issue, Speculation about Causes or Effects, and to some extent Interpretation.

Persuasive writing prompts might ask students to write to a parent arguing for a change in the rules or routines at home. Another prompt might simply ask students to give their opinion about a controversial subject at school and explain their reasons.

Score Point 6 – Exceptional Performance

Focus/coherence

Position. Writers of six-point papers usually assert and maintain a clear position throughout the piece; they present evidence and explanations in a purposeful way. Occasionally, these writers will effectively evaluate both sides of an issue and offer a reasonable compromise; or they may conclude that neither position is preferable, or they may suggest a third position.

Organization. Writers arrange reasons, examples, information and/or personal anecdotes in a discernible and effective pattern resulting in an overall persuasive effect.

Coherence. Writers provide overall links or transitions; they present arguments, evidence, and reasons logically so that the overall effect is one of coherence.

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Elaboration

Depth/Density of Arguments. Writers thoroughly develop and elaborate their reasons, examples, information and/or anecdotes. Some writers may develop only one reason or example, but they do so in depth; others may choose to develop several appropriate reasons, examples, and so forth.

Relevance of Arguments. Writers choose and present appropriate reasons, examples, information, and so forth to support argument(s). They show that their arguments are valid based on prior knowledge, personal experience and reflection.

Audience Awareness. Writers choose and present arguments with a clear awareness of reader needs. They often show credibility and a sense of authority by revealing source(s) of information. They may anticipate possible reader response by including some counter-arguments.

Style

Word Choice. These writers use lively, interesting concrete language that carries precise meanings and emotions. Word choice is appropriate to the writer's purpose.

Sentence Variety. Writers vary sentence length and type, making the writing interesting and readable.

Voice. Writers use a tone appropriate to argument, sometimes shifting tone for rhetorical effect. They evidence confidence, conviction, belief and sometimes enthusiasm. Exceptional papers show a flair resulting from interesting ideas expressed in an original or artful way.

Score Point 5 – Commendable Performance

Focus/coherence

Position: Writers of five-point papers state a clear position, but the position may not be presented as consistently, or evidence and explanations may not appear as purposeful as in a six-point paper. Some may not take a stand at all, but will evaluate both sides and conclude that neither is preferable or offer a compromise or a third position.

Organization. Ideas/reasons/information are arranged in an effective pattern with only minor lapses in unity.

Coherence. Writers provide overall links, but transitions may not always be smooth; ideas/reasons are clear and logical.

Elaboration

Depth/Density of Arguments. Reasons, evidence, examples, information and anecdotes are developed but with less elaboration than in a six-point paper.

Relevance of Arguments. Five-point papers generally include appropriate reasons, examples, information and anecdotes; arguments generally are based on prior experience and reflection but with less elaboration than exemplary papers; writers may not have worked at developing credibility and some sources of information may not be revealed. However, opinions aren't presented as facts.

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Audience Awareness. Writers have chosen their arguments, evidence, information, and so forth with the reader in mind, but may not have anticipated audience response.

Style

Word Choice. Words are lively, interesting, and concrete but chosen with somewhat less attention to exact meaning and emotional appeal. Word choice is appropriate to writer's purpose.

Sentence Variety. Writers vary sentence length and type with occasional repetitive structures or other lapses in control.

Voice. Writers use a tone appropriate to the argument(s), and evidence a high degree of conviction and belief, and expressive themselves in a distinctively personal voice.

Score Point 4 – Proficient Performance

Focus/coherence

Position. Four-point papers take a position(s) but may sometimes waver or include digressions.

Organization. Four-point papers show a discernible pattern with some lapses; may show a loose structure resembling a list with some development.

Coherence. Four-point papers are understandable; arguments, reasons, ideas, and so forth are usually clear but less convincingly logical than higher score point papers.

Elaboration

Depth/Density of Arguments. Reasons, examples, information and anecdotes are appropriate and provide adequate depth, but some areas need e*laboration*.

Relevance of Arguments. Arguments and evidence are usually relevant to the writer's position; evidence of prior experience or reflection on the topic, or sources of information, probably have not been revealed. Sometimes opinions appear as facts.

Audience Awareness. Evidence of reader awareness may be superficial (directly addressing readers) or scant. These writers seem to assume that their readers will find them credible.

Style

Word Choice. Four-point papers contain an adequate selection of words; language lacks the vigor and exactness of higher score point papers, but word choice is generally appropriate.

Sentence Variety. Writers of four-point papers rely on a small range of sentence lengths and types.

Voice. These writers convey a sense of conviction, but may not express themselves in a lively or particularly engaging voice.

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Score Point 3 – Minimally Proficient Performance

Focus/coherence

Position. Writers of three-point papers may take a position(s), or they may straddle the fence by not taking a position or offering a satisfactory conclusion; a longer paper will probably meander and contain many digressions.

Organization. Three-point papers may open and/or close in a reasonable way, but the shape of the argument or evidence will be loose or unsystematic or be an undeveloped list.

Coherence. Writers of three-point papers offer arguments that are usually related, but in ways that aren't made entirely clear; some areas of vagueness or confusion may be present.

Elaboration

Depth/Density of Arguments. Reasons are not always clear and/or evidence is not always adequate; most areas lack elaboration.

Relevance of Arguments. Three-point papers will contain some irrelevant and inappropriate arguments and/or examples.

Audience Awareness. The paper does not reflect the writer's awareness of a reader.

Style

Word Choice. Like four-point papers, three-point papers contain predictable vocabulary choices; some inappropriate word choices may be present.

Sentence Variety. Writers of three-point papers frequently repeat sentence type and have little variety of length.

Voice. Three-point papers reveal a mechanical tone; little evidence of real conviction may be present. The tone of the writing may be overly authoritative, hostile, whiny, or pleading.

Score Point 2 – Limited Performance

Focus/coherence

Position. Two-point papers may be so brief that it is difficult to discern whether the paper takes a position; the writer may shift from one position to another with little awareness; or the piece may simply ramble.

Organization. Two-point papers may show a "jumping around" quality; they may reveal little discernible pattern or shape.

Coherence. Two-point papers contain disconnected ideas, arguments and/or evidence; many areas of vagueness and/or confusion are present.

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Elaboration

Depth/Density of Arguments. Reasons, examples, and anecdotes are thin; most areas need elaboration.

Relevance of Arguments. Many of the ideas and arguments are tangentially relevant at best; many are inappropriate or unclear.

Audience Awareness. Like three-point papers, these papers evidence little reader awareness but to an even greater degree. Writers of two-point papers often assume readers already know what they think.

Style

Word Choice. Like three-point papers, these papers may contain cliched or predictable vocabulary choices; many choices will seem inappropriate or inexact.

Sentence Variety. Writers of two-point papers usually compose in short, simples sentences.

Voice. Two-point papers are mechanical or inappropriate in tone and present little evidence of conviction and belief.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Performance

Focus/coherence

Position. Little or no discernible direction.

Organization. Little or no pattern.

Coherence. Little or no coherence.

Elaboration

Depth/Density of Arguments. Little or no depth of development.

Relevance of Arguments. Irrelevant arguments; little or no control over the presentation of ideas, reasons, etc.

Audience Awareness. No evidence of reader awareness.

Style

Word Choice. Word choices are almost always simple and general.

Sentence Variety. Little variety in sentence type or length; may show complete lack of sentence control.

Voice. Little, if any, discernible and/or consistent voice; little or no appropriate level of authority is shown; no evidence of engagement in the argument.

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

"Good-evning ladies and gentelmen. I come to you tonight with a few simple facts. The pack you are ready to face down is this very nun it filled with children. It is the favorit place to play of many children, as well as myself. Do you anistly think that children at the age of two and three are going to enjoy a mall more than a park?! I would also like to bring to your atichun that we already have over five Stores in one plazza. You can get there very esleyo I admit that it's about a half hour away, but

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

wouldn it be 'hole lot
of trouble to spend
a little more cash &
as long as you kaow
that children are happy
and safe. You, and only
you can make that
chois to make that
difreace!! How would
you feel if you were
a child playing ia your
favorit place to play,
beutiful shady trees, and
fresh green grass. A
perfict place to play,
take ayour dog for a
walk, play with another
pet, or even just sit
areound and look at
the beutiful 3
unpolouited skyo And
then after knowing it
had been there for
over 100 years, and
their going to tare it
down! Oh! The feeling

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

thoes poor children must
have! Please! Please! Just
stop and think about
this matter! This is
very sereous. I didn't
come here to wach
thoes C.A.T.s tare
up that park! Pleas
consiter my slotion.
I bid yoyr good night.

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

From the opening ("Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I come to you tonight with a few simple facts . . ."), this writer exudes confidence, focuses on an audience and takes a firm stand on an issue. These attributes of persuasive writing are maintained throughout the piece.

Support for the writer's credible arguments in favor of a park versus a mall are drawn from personal experiences. She uses examples: "We already have over five stores in our plaza," and notes that the park is "a perfect place to play, take your dog for a walk." She includes reflection, "Do you 'anistly' think that children at the age of two or three are going to enjoy a mall. . . ?" Her arguments are appropriate and appeal to reason (safety) and emotions ("I didn't come here to watch thoses C.A.T.S tare up that park!")

This writer is consistently aware of and appeals to her audience with appropriate tone and lively language. Spelling errors, typical of first draft writing ("thoes," "waeh"), do not detract from the argument; and inventive spelling of words like "anitstly," "atichon," "unpoluited," and "sereouss" actually enhance the writer's authority and convey precise meaning and emotions. This writer definitely shows a flair for expressing ideas in an original and artful way.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement

Dear Tommy,

Jessica might tease you, but don't let that stop you from making friends. You've got a whole new life ahead of you, (not to mention school). You're a bright kid and your chin should always be held high. Once you get to know them, people will like you. Give them a chance.

School is no problem, once you get used to it. I'll bet at your last school you had lots of friends. It's probably hard leaving your hometown to come to live in the city. Although, it is quite peaceful out here. When I first moved to the city I was lonely and scared, but now that I have Jenna, Scott and, yes, you Tommy, I love the city.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

Jenna, Scott, Mary and Kris like you for a friend, too. Kris said: you're pretty good in gym class and History. Everyone wants you to come to the pizza parlor tomorrow after school. See, you do have friends!

I talked to Miss Harsly yesterday and she said that Harvey, Jessica, and Tommy had the highest scores on the test!

Now you're getting good grades.

What's there to worry about, genious? Everything's going your way! Marcie has asked you for tutoring. I think you should accept. She asked if $2.00 an hour would be alright.

You know, maybe you should talk out your feelings with Jessica. I know she gave you a bloody nose trying to smash an aluminum can on your forhead, but that doesn't mean she's your enemy. You want as many friends as you can get.

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Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(continued)*

I've got a good idea that might cheer you up. Let's name all your friends and why they like you.

Jenna: She likes your positive attitude.

Scott: You both like gym.

Mary: She likes your smile.

Kris: He likes your clothes, (he thinks they're cool).

Marcie: She thinks you're smart

Harvey: He thinks you're smart, too.

Christina: I think you're a true friend.

Larry: He likes your blue eyes.

Your Teachers: They think your smart.

Your Parents: They like your "adorable diples".

You: You have to like yourself before you like anyone else.

Essay Illustrating High-range Achievement *(concluded)*

I hope this has cleared or brightened up your day. I want you to read your friend list everyday and get gnather sheet of paper and add to that list. And I want to see that smiley face, that good attitude, those big blue eyes, that smart brain, those stylish clothes, that true friend, those "adorable diples and the rest of your body at the pizza parlor tomorrow. Bye!

Your "True" Friend,

P.S. Jessica's going to be there!

Commentary for High-range Achievement Essay

The writer asserts and maintains a clear positive position throughout the piece from the beginning "You're a bright kid and your chin should be held high," to the ending "I hope this has cleared and brightened up your day." She arranges her reasons and evidence in a sophisticated pattern. Varied support for her view that Tommy can and does have friends is presented through personal experiences and examples from school, peers, and family. In most sections she refutes Tommy's insecurities with strong relevant personal anecdotes. These are presented in precise, interesting, and readable language. She increases the intensity of her argument and shows a subtle shift in tone when she asks, "What's there to worry about genius?" The writer's recursive arguments effectively convince the reader that, indeed, his problem can be solved.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

I want to talk to you about solving problems with children. Many children want to grow up and live on their own. They like to choose friends, the way they act, and talk.

If you want to solve problems your child is having, you must spend more time with your child. For example, you should talk to them about their day, help them with homework or reports, or play games with them. Even if you don't need to solve problems, you should do this with your child.

When you spend time with them, the children understand you more. After a game of baseball or a lesson of art is a good time to sit down and talk about problems. At first tell them gently what you want them to do. Don't let them walk out of arguments. Have a talk to see if they've done what you told them.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement *(concluded)*

If it is a different kind of problem, like children wanting to grow up too fast. tell them they must enjoy childhood while they still have it.

You always have to be a good parent.

- Spend time with your kids.
- Don't go away a lot.
- Have a good time with your children and encourage them to do their best.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

The writer of this paper sets the context for her arguments in the first paragraph and then launches into advice to parents on how to solve problems with their children.

Direct arguments are supported with examples: "talk to them about their day," "help them with homework," and "play games with them." Evidence of reflection appears when the writer advises the reader to do these things anyway even if there are no problems to solve and when she observes that "the children understand you more." While arguments and evidence are appropriate, some need more elaboration ("I have a talk to see if they've done what you told them,"and "Don't go away a lot.") Audience awareness is evident throughout, although appeals lack the vigor and exactness of higher score point papers. The use of bullets to summarize the writer's arguments is an effective tool and adds to her sense of conviction. Predictable word choice throughout the paper is countered by sentences of clear construction and variety.

Essay Illustrating Mid-range Achievement

I am quite pleased with our lunch. However I would preffer to have longer lunch tables so we could sit by more of my friends. I would like to have an earlier lunch time, about 12:10. The food the school serves in the cafateria is usually good, but sometimes they serve is not very good. At lunch recess I wish there were more balls to play with. The asfault on the playground is very tedious because anytime someone falls they get skinned up from the loose asfault.

Commentary for Mid-range Essay

This writer begins where the writing prompt ended as he says, "I am quite pleased with our lunch," which is the only indication of the topic of this piece. In the next sentence the writer refutes his opinion and continues to do so throughout the rest of the paper. The reader is never clear about the degree or seriousness of the writer's objections to cafeteria food, the scarcity of balls or the condition of the "asfault" playground. The reader must assume that the writer knows about these examples of lunch time inadequacies from personal experience, but that is never made clear. These brief examples require more elaboration in order to make a stronger argument. At no time does the writer address an audience directly thus further diminishing the strength of his position. While the writer's ideas of lunch hour inadequacies are clear, he loses credibility by offering no solution so them and by abruptly ending the piece.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

Dear Parents,

I think when you tell your child what to do and they say no, Do what any other parent would do lock them in their room until they come through and do what you told them to.

From,

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

The writer, in his attempt to help a parent solve a problem with a child, states the problem, provides a response, and presents a possible solution in a brief correct letter form. The situation, though sketchily presented, is not sufficiently elaborated upon to convince the reader. The writer states his source—"Do what any other parent would do," but in a superficial and minimal statement.

Although we can appreciate the straightforwardness of the writer, we can only see limited evidence of achievement in this paper.

Essay Illustrating Low-range Achievement

Dear parents I do not like my bed time I think I should be able to stay up until 10:00 because at 9:00 I not sleepy yet at 9:00 the reason I think I should sleep at 10:00 is becaus by I would brobobly be a sleep and because I don't like my bed time it's boring at 9:00 it is beler to sleep at 10:00

Commentary for Low-range Achievement Essay

This paper, while addressing the problem, shows little understanding of how to write a persuasive letter. The writer does address the prompt, state an opinion, give a brief argument then repeats the original argument. His recursive argument, based only on opinion, is weak.

IV. Sample Elementary Prompt

Section One
Reading

An Excerpt from *Stone Fox* by John Gardiner

Getting Ready to Read

Here is some information about the story you will read. It will help you understand what is happening.

Little Willy and his dog Searchlight are in a dog sled race. So are Stone Fox and his five beautiful Samoyeds (a strong breed of dog with a thick white coat). The prize in the race is $500.00.

Little Willy hopes to win the money to save his grandfather's farm. His grandfather is very ill. Stone Fox hopes to win the $500.00 to buy back land for his Indian tribe, the Shoshone.

This part of the story begins in the middle of the race. Read to see what happens.

John R. Gardiner. *Stone Fox*. New York: Thomas Y Crowell, 1980. Text © 1980 by John Reynold Gardiner.

Time to Read

STONE FOX

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

As they approached the farmhouse, little Willy thought he saw someone in Grandfather's bedroom window. It was difficult to see with only one good eye. The someone was a man. With a full beard.

It couldn't be. But it was! It was Grandfather!

Grandfather was sitting up in bed. He was looking out the window.

Little Willy was so excited he couldn't think straight. He started to stop the sled, but Grandfather indicated no, waving him on. "Of course," little Willy said to himself. "I must finish the race. I haven't won yet."

"Go, Searchlight!" little Willy shrieked.

"Go, girl!"

Grandfather was better. Tears of joy rolled down little Willy's smiling face. Everything was going to be all right.

And then Stone Fox made his move.

One by one he began to pass the other racers. He went from last place to eighth. Then from eighth place to seventh. Then from seventh to sixth. Sixth to fifth.

He passed the others as if they were standing still.

He went from fifth place to fourth. Then to third. Then to second.

Until only little Willy remained.

But little Willy still had a good lead. In fact, it was not until the last two miles of the race that

GO ON

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Stone Fox got his first glimpse of little Willy since the race had begun.

The five Samoyeds looked magnificent as they moved effortlessly across the snow. Stone Fox was gaining, and he was gaining fast. And little Willy wasn't aware of it.

Look back, little Willy! Look Back!

But little Willy didn't look back. He was busy thinking about Grandfather. He could hear him laughing...and playing his harmonica...

Finally little Willy glanced back over his shoulder. He couldn't believe what he saw! Stone Fox was nearly on top of him!

This made little Willy mad. Mad at himself. Why hadn't he looked back more often? What was he doing? He hadn't won yet. Well, no time to think of that now.

He had a race to win.

"Go, Searchlight! Go, girl!"

But Stone Fox kept gaining. Silently. Steadily.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

The lead Samoyed passed little Willy and pulled up even with Searchlight. Then it was a nose ahead. But that was all. Searchlight moved forward, inching *her* nose ahead. Then the Samoyed regained the lead. Then Searchlight...

When you enter the town of Jackson on South Road, the first buildings come into view about a half a mile away. Whether Searchlight took those buildings to be Grandfather's farmhouse again, no one can be sure, but it was at this time that she poured on the steam.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Little Willy's sled seemed to lift up off the ground and fly. Stone Fox was left behind.

The crowd cheered madly when they saw little Willy come into view at the far end of Main Street, and even more madly when they saw that Stone Fox was right on his tail.

"Go, Searchlight! Go!"

Searchlight forged ahead. But Stone Fox was gaining!

"Go, Searchlight! Go!" little Willy cried out.

Searchlight gave it everything she had.

She was a hundred feet from the finish line when her heart burst. She died instantly. There was no suffering.

The sled and little Willy tumbled over her, slid along the snow for a while, then came to a stop about ten feet from the finish line. It had started to snow — white snowflakes landed on Searchlight's dark fur as she lay motionless on the ground.

The crowd became deathly silent.

Stone Fox brought his sled to a stop alongside little Willy. He stood tall in the icy wind and looked down at the young challenger, and at the dog that lay limp in his arms.

"Is she dead, Mr. Stone Fox? Is she dead?" little Willy asked, looking up at Stone Fox with his one good eye.

Stone Fox knelt down and put one massive hand on Searchlight's chest. He felt no heartbeat. He looked at little Willy, and the boy understood.

My thoughts, feelings, and questions about what I am reading

Little Willy squeezed Searchlight with all his might. "You did real good, girl. Real good. I'm real proud of you. You rest now. Just rest." Little Willy began to brush the snow off Searchlight's back.

Stone Fox stood up slowly.

No one spoke. No one moved. All eyes were on the Indian, the one called Stone Fox, the one who had never lost a race, and who now had another victory within his grasp.

But Stone Fox did nothing.

He just stood there. Like a mountain.

After You Have Read

1. What feelings do you have about what happens in the story?

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GO ON

2. Select a line or lines from the story that interest you or make you think.

   Write the line or lines in the box below.

Tell why you chose these lines.

3. Read these lines from the story again:

But Stone Fox did nothing.
He just stood there. Like a mountain.

What do you think Stone Fox might have been thinking and feeling as he stood there?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of Stone Fox's head. If you could look into the mind of Stone Fox, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of Stone Fox

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of Stone Fox mean to you.

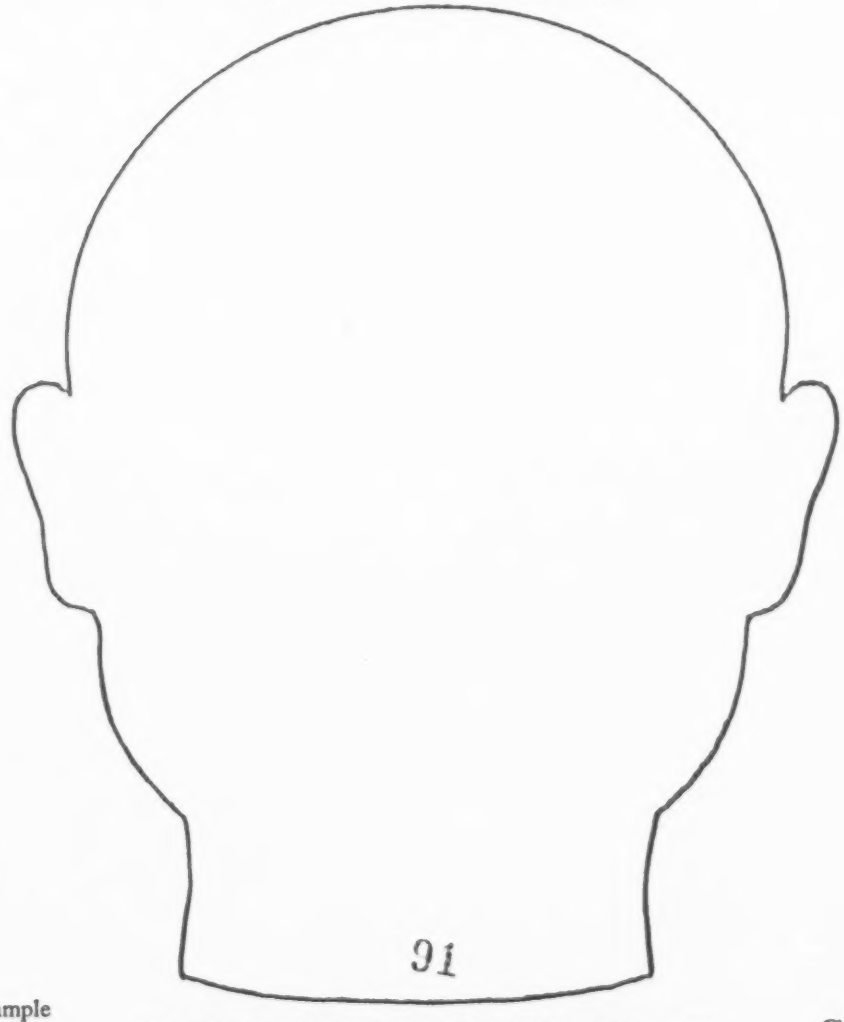
4. Read these lines from the story again:

Little Willy squeezed Searchlight
with all his might.

What do you think little Willy might have been thinking and feeling as he held Searchlight?

Below is an "open mind" drawing of little Willy's head. If you could look into the mind of little Willy, what thoughts and feelings might he have? Make drawings and/or write words inside the "open mind" below that show his thoughts and feelings.

Open Mind of little Willy



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GO ON

Tell what the pictures and/or words that you put in your "open mind" of little Willy mean to you.

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GO ON

5. Go back and read the last two lines of the story and write what you think is going to happen next.

What in the story makes you think that it will end this way?

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This is your page to tell us anything else about your understanding of this story — what it means to you, what it makes you think about in your own life, or anything that relates to your reading of it.

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section One.

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Section Two
Working With Your Group

Group Leader: _____

1. In Section One you read an excerpt from the story *Stone Fox*. In your group, talk about what you remember most about the story. Give each member of your group a chance to talk. Take about 5 minutes to review the story together.

2. Think back to Section One when you wrote about how you thought the story might end. Share these ideas with your group. Be sure everyone has a chance to share.

3. You have read a part of the story *Stone Fox* and you have listened to each other's ideas about endings to the story. Below is the actual ending to the story *Stone Fox* written by the author, John Gardiner.

   Choose a member of your group to read the rest of the story on the next page out loud as you follow along silently.

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GO ON

"Is she dead, Mr. Stone Fox? Is she dead?" little Willy asked, looking up at Stone Fox with his one good eye.

Stone Fox knelt down and put one massive hand on Searchlight's chest. He felt no heartbeat. He looked at little Willy, and the boy understood.

Little Willy squeezed Searchlight with all his might. "You did real good, girl. Real good. I'm real proud of you. You rest now. Just rest." Little Willy began to brush the snow off Searchlight's back.

Stone Fox stood up slowly.

No one spoke. No one moved. All eyes were on the Indian, the one called Stone Fox, the one who had never lost a race, and who now had another victory within his grasp.

But Stone Fox did nothing.

He just stood there. Like a mountain.

His eyes shifted to his own dogs, then to the finish line, then back to little Willy, holding Searchlight.

With the heel of his moccasin Stone Fox drew a long line in the snow. The he walked back over to his sled and pulled out his rifle.

Down at the end of Main Street, the other racers began to appear. As they approached, Stone Fox fired his rifle into the air. They came to a stop.

Stone Fox spoke.

"Anyone crosses this line—I shoot."

And there wasn't anybody who didn't believe him.

Stone Fox nodded to the boy.

The town looked on in silence as little Willy, carrying Searchlight, walked the last ten feet and across the finish line.

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GO ON

4. How do you feel about this ending? Take a few minutes to write down your thoughts.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Now share your thoughts with your group, allowing everybody the chance to talk.

6. As you discussed the end of the story with your group, you discovered that Stone Fox helped little Willy to win the race. Why do you think Stone Fox did this? Discuss this with your group. As your group talks, jot down people's ideas in the space below.

Why Stone Fox helped little Willy

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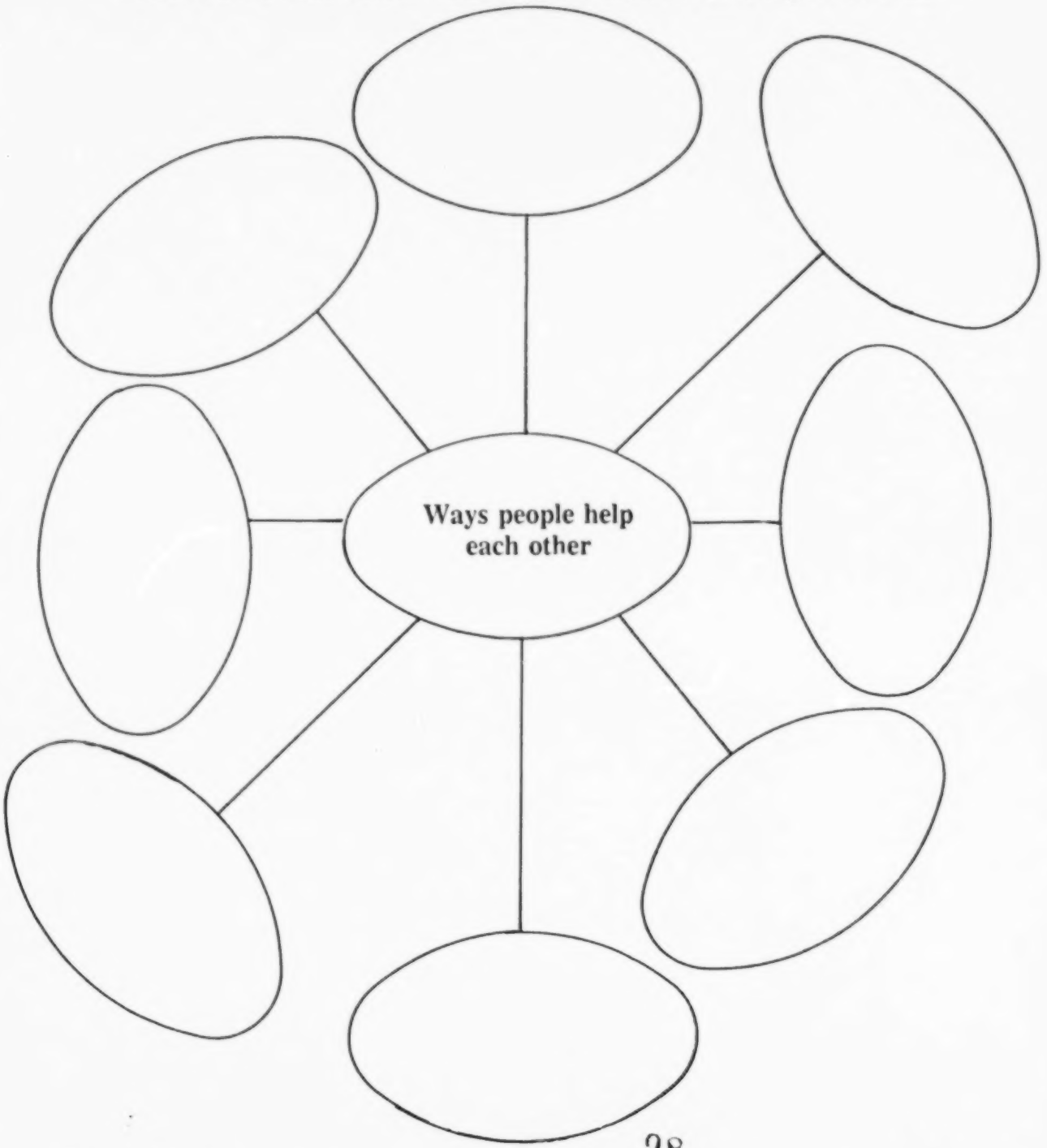
GO ON

7. Like Stone Fox, people help each other in many different ways. In your group, suggest some ways that people can help each other. Put your group's ideas in the cluster below. You may add more bubbles if you need to.



Elementary Sample

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GO ON

8. Think about times when you have helped someone or when someone has helped you. Write down as many ideas as you can remember. You may want to use these ideas for the next part of the test.

Ways I helped other people	Ways other people helped me

9. Share these ideas with your group.

STOP!
DO NOT TURN THE PAGE!

This is the end of Section Two.

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Section Three
Writing

Helping Others

Getting Ready to Write

For your teacher, you are going to write about a time when you helped someone or someone helped you. Think about this topic. You may use the list you made in Section Two of this test. Choose <u>one</u> time that is important to you. To help you write about that time, use the space below to cluster, list, or sketch the important details of this event.

Time to Write

Write about a time when you helped someone or someone helped you. Include the kind of details that will help your teacher understand what happened and why it was important to you.

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GO ON